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ABSTRACT

This resource guide is designed to summarize the relevant research and practical information currently available to administrators on school effectiveness. The guide consists of two major sections to aid in the development of planning skills and the implementation of programs to increase student and teacher performance. The first section details the "Process Steps": formation of teams, assessing needs, establishing priorities, developing action plans, implementation of the plans, monitoring progress, and evaluation of the impacts. The second broad area covered is labeled "School Effectiveness Variables" and reviews the research on school goals, instructional leadership, setting high expectations, time on task, student performance, safe environment, and home-school relations. In each subtopic actions are suggested, the research is summarized, considerations for the principal are given, and selected references are included. (LMS)

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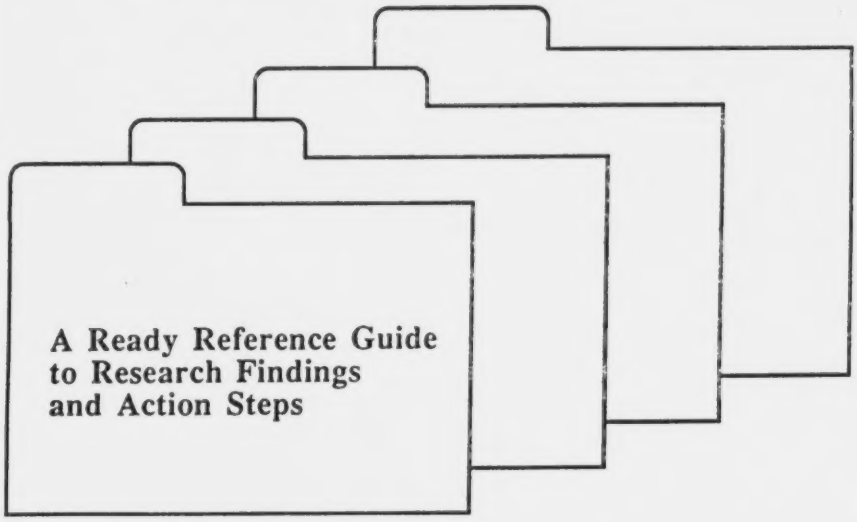
Achieving School Effectiveness

Process Steps and Variables



A Ready Reference Guide
to Research Findings
and Action Steps

Rhode Island Educational Leadership Academy

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FOREWORD

With so many of our current educational reform efforts emanating from federal and state initiatives, we should not forget that effective school improvement is ultimately a function of what principals and teachers do in their schools and classrooms. Fortunately, the very substantial body of research on school effectiveness serves as a powerful reminder. The verification of so much of what many perceive as common sense has led educators in Rhode Island to assure that the principles of school effectiveness become common practice.

In Rhode Island, our attention to school effectiveness–a top priority of the Rhode Island Department of Education since 1984–has been a collaborative endeavor. Stimulated and funded by the Department, the program is designed and administered by the Rhode Island Educational Leadership Academy through conferences, workshops, and technical assistance. A network of more than fifty principals throughout Rhode Island is engaged in a systematic improvement process focused on selected effectiveness variables.

The research and practice literature is extensive and continues to grow. Conversely, the time available to principals for studying effectiveness research and information and developing an improvement plan is limited. This resource guide is meant to alleviate that problem by making summaries of relevant research and practice information accessible to principals.

J. Troy Earhart

J. Troy Earhart
Commissioner
Elementary and Secondary Education
April 1986

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Achieving School Effectiveness: Process Steps and Variables is the result of requests for information on school effectiveness from participating members of the Rhode Island Educational Leadership Academy. It is also the result of the collective efforts of individual academy members who painstakingly reviewed textbooks, bibliographies, research syntheses, educational journal articles, conference and workshop hand-outs, checklists, local district workplans, and other sources of information on file at the Rhode Island Educational Leadership Academy. Donald Gainey, Carl Johnson and James McNaught diligently gathered, sorted, reviewed and rated the burgeoning and sometimes bewildering collection of materials. Don Gainey developed lists of selected readings that the Academy staff used to respond to request for information. The first-hand reflections of all three on practical steps and special considerations for the principal strongly influenced the format.

In addition to making some sense out of a bewildering array of printed material, these individuals developed selected reading lists to be sent out by Academy staff in response to requests for information.

As consultant to the Rhode Island Educational Leadership Academy, Douglas S. Fleming completed the framework for each process step and effectiveness variable. He applied his experience in working with school-based teams, principals, and school effectiveness research to fill in some gaps and smooth out some rough spots in the information base.

Henry D'Aloisio, Technical Assistance Specialist in the Rhode Island Department of Education, provided important perspectives on relationships between school effectiveness planning and other educational improvement initiatives in the state, particularly the Basic Education Plan.

The Rhode Island Educational Leadership Academy is grateful for the support demonstrated by the Rhode Island Department of Education through its financial support. In addition to providing funds for the Effective Schools Project, the Department printed this publication. Edward Costa, Director of School Services in the Department of Education was a patient and helpful mentor in planning and implementing the Project and this resource guide.

Finally, the Academy recognizes the leadership and support of Commissioner J. Troy Earhart, whose vision provided the impetus for the Project and whose insights have fostered its success.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Research and experience testify to the importance of effective school administrators. The need for visionary leadership and productive school management has never been more acute. School principals, particularly, are central figures in school improvement activities. Despite their critical role in initiating, supporting, or advocating use of research-based school improvement practices, administrators have few opportunities to read individual research reports, to share on-the job applications of school improvement approaches, or to engage in long range strategic planning. As a response to the need for concise information that highlights research findings, suggests practical action steps, and provides special considerations for school improvement leadership, the Rhode Island Educational Leadership Academy has developed this ready reference guide. Individual components of the guide have been used in conjunction with regular monthly programs sponsored by the Academy during the 1985-86 academic year and with special seminars for principals through Rhode Island School Staff Institutes.

Achieving School Effectiveness: Process Steps and Variables has been designed to help Rhode Island Principals develop their planning skills, refine their understanding of issues related to school effectiveness, and implement programs that lead to increased teacher and student performance. The guide consists of two sections. Their contents are listed below.

Process Steps	School Effectiveness Variable
1. Form Teams	Clear and Focused School Goals
2. Assess Needs	Instructional Leadership
3. Establish Priorities	High Expectations
4. Develop Action Plans	Time on Task
5. Implement Plans	Monitoring Student Performance
6. Monitor Progress	Safe and Orderly Environment
7. Evaluate Impact	Home-School Relations

Each process step provides practical advice, concrete examples, and a list of further references for school improvement leaders. Each school effectiveness variable presents highlights from the research, special considerations for the principal, and sources for more detailed analysis. The summaries are highly selective, focused on the core elements of each process step or effectiveness variable, and provide direction for further study and implementation.

Principals, teachers and other school administrators need many resources in order to respond coherently to these pressures. Information is an important first step in ordering needs and seeking solutions. This guide makes a modest but essential contribution to the work of administrators and teachers attempting to improve the effectiveness of schools. Ultimately, however, it is through educators' vision, commitment and energy that schools will improve and flourish.

Charles Mojkowski
Executive Director
Rhode Island Educational Leadership Academy

PROCESS STEPS

Form Teams
Assess Needs
Establish Priorities
Develop Action Plans
Implement Plans
Monitoring Progress
Evaluate Impact

PROCESS STEP # 1

FORM TEAMS

"Through collaborative participation in decision-making, an increased sense of psychological ownership can be developed within a team, making it likely that action plans, once decided upon, will be fully implemented by team members."

—Schwartz, M., et al, (1976).
The Development of Educational Teams
Oregon: Center for Educational Policy and Management

The team is charged with collecting and reviewing student performance data, analyzing and discussing the information collected, describing school strengths and weaknesses, setting goals for improvement, examining alternative strategies, and designing plans for improvement. They are also responsible for implementing plans, monitoring the progress of projects, and involving the full staff at key points in the process. The success of the effort depends largely upon the influence, composition, and skill of the group. Therefore, it is essential that the school effectiveness team gets off to a healthy start.

Suggested Action Steps:

1. Develop procedures for team selection. They must be clear, flexible, supportive of risk-taking, and allow for a broad-base of input. In some schools, the faculty votes or appoints members to serve. In others, the principal selects from among volunteers. Occasionally, the context of the school allows the principal to hand-pick team members. Using an already established work-group (department chairs, curriculum council, faculty advisory committee) may only impede the effectiveness of the original group.

2. Describe the process steps and school effectiveness variables in an overall way—both orally and in writing. Emphasize that the school building perspective (as opposed to a classroom, grade level, or subject matter perspective) is needed.

3. Communicate the tasks and time commitments for involvement to faculty both orally and in writing.

4 Extend invitations to participate to all—with opportunity to gracefully decline or to become involved in other ways in follow-through or implementation stages.

5. Address the personal concerns people might have about becoming involved. Who supports and finances the effort? Can we get in-service credit? When will meetings be scheduled?

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6. Describe training and support available to help team members get the job done. Determine needs for assistance in conducting meetings, making group decisions, dealing with conflicts, or gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data.

From a memo to faculty from a principal:

Participating in this process involves taking a close look at our school and examining its strengths and weaknesses to determine what areas can be improved to increase the levels of achievement of all students. During the assessment phase of the process, you and your colleagues will be asked to evaluate the quality of several variables influencing student achievement.All of the research points to the principal as a key variable in the effectiveness of the school. Can you offer that information honestly and constructively? Are you willing to support the efforts of your principal in leading this school improvement process?

Special considerations for the Principal:

§ Decide how many people should be on the team. Six to eight is an effective number for good discussions, but local conditions may require more or fewer members for adequate representation.

§ Look to people who will have a positive influence on the project and the school community- persons who encourage others to follow them—but take care to pool information from a variety of points of view.

§ Assess the composition of the proposed team. Do team members display these essential qualities:

Sincerity-	Do they take the role seriously?
Reliability-	Will they regularly attend meetings?
Enthusiasm-	Do they have the stamina to assimilate a lot of information?
Team-work-	Can they work well with others in dividing tasks and reaching conclusions?
Objectivity-	Can they separate issues from personalities?

§ Determine how the school effectiveness project meshes with other district goals and priorities. Are there other projects that compete for staff time and energies? Is the central office prepared to back its support for your effort with other resources (incentives, meeting spaces, released time, money)?

§ Clear your calendar. Regularly scheduled meetings are important to discuss problems, celebrate small successes, and to coordinate activity. The team needs you: be there.

§ Principals working with school effectiveness teams face an exciting, promising, time-consuming, and sometimes painful opportunity for growth. School leaders should not undertake any project for which they and their staff are not carefully prepared. Some questions for principals considering using a "team approach" are listed below:

- Are you personally ready to take an objective look at practices in your school?

- Are you willing to consider both the strengths and weaknesses of your instructional programs?
- Are you ready to accept criticism and hear frustrations about you or your role as an instructional leader?
- How effective is the communication in your building?
- Can you accept and work with people at their level of readines ?
- Are you prepared to provide additional guidance and support to the team as it learns to operate in a new role?

In Summary

- Patience is vital
- Do not try to everything in a month
- Team building is a slow process
- Carefully plan early successes and evolve from them
- Team members must know and/or learn the needs of teachers in the building
- Breakfast meetings can be reinforcers for teachers
- Principal support is vital
- Inservice training for team members is helpful
- Strengthen the team by sharing successes and failures
- Teams should establish a regular meeting time (e.g., every other Tuesday at 7:30 a.m.
- Team members should divide the responsibility for building support and communicating with faculty members
- Team members should represent a cross-section of the school

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PROCESS STEP # 2

ASSESS NEEDS

"Our needs assessment instrument and data gathering process prevented us from defining the wrong problem."
—a school team member, Northeast Regional School Effectiveness Project

The needs assessment phase of school improvement planning is an information-gathering process in which all staff members and the school team identify areas of needed improvement in the school.

Suggested Action Steps:

1. Develop a comprehensive list of areas to be explored. Consult with experts, review the literature on school effectiveness, or get input from key faculty members or community groups. The Rhode Island Educational Leadership Academy can provide you with a current bibliography of essential articles and selected resources in seven areas. These are:

   - Safe and orderly environment
   - Clear and focused goals
   - Instructional leadership
   - High expectations
   - Time on task
   - Student progress monitoring
   - Home-school relations

2. Locate or develop a questionnaire that is matched to the school improvement areas you want to explore more fully with your school building community. Your questionnaire may be comprehensive, covering all of these areas, or may be more focused and detailed, exploring an area in depth. The Rhode Island Department of Education or the Rhode Island Educational Leadership Academy can assist you in acquiring surveys and questionnaires to use or modify. In addition, they can identify consultants who can help you tailor a questionnaire to your own school needs. You may want to survey one or all of the following groups to get a sense of a common need for improvement:

   - school faculty
   - school students
   - parents and other community members

3. Administer the questionnaire. Encourage 100% of your staff to participate. Some principals have faculty return unsigned surveys to a secretary who checks their name off a list. The survey itself may be completed anonymously to assure objectivity and honesty. Other principals use faculty meeting time to complete the questionnaire.

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4. Conducting interviews is time consuming, but demonstrates sincerity of interest and allows for professional reflection. Team members may require some training before conducting interviews. Where used, it provides a good check on questionnaire data and increases the yield of useful suggestions for appropriate action steps. It also avoids over-reliance on numerical data.

5. Promise that staff will receive a tabulation of responses and a summary report on the results of the survey or interview data. Emphasize that the document is for "internal consumption" only—part of an honest attempt to set realistic goals and an achievable action agenda—not a public report card on the school.

6. Report the results of the needs assessment process both orally and in writing. This will demonstrate to the entire staff that

   - There are no "secrets" kept by the team
   - Not all members of the faculty perceive things the same way
   - The needs assessment gives the improvement team needed direction
   - Faculty input is needed and valued
   - The team is working on concerns related to both teaching and learning

7. The report to faculty need not be exhaustive. Report only the areas of major discrepancy in perception or inequity. Use overhead transparencies or other visual aids to profile performance and show where action needs to be taken.

Special Considerations for the Principal:

§ Give the school improvement team and the entire staff a rough time-line for the completion of the school improvement activities this year.

§ Arrange for periodic reviews of progress to the whole faculty and central office administrators.

§ Stress the role that the needs assessment process plays in the overall school improvement process: it helps to bring about goal clarity and a sense of shared mission and responsibility.

§ Needs assessment and reporting to faculty is a team activity. Be generous in praise and demonstrated appreciation for staff cooperation. Involve team members in presenting results to faculty.

§ Wherever appropriate, other objective reports (e.g., Special Education, Compensatory Education, Annual School Evaluation, Curriculum Revision, Basic Education Plan) can be used to verify perceptions.

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PROCESS STEP # 3

ESTABLISH PRIORITIES

"Half of knowing what you want is acknowledging what you must give up in order to get it."

—Sign in a bakery shop

After the results of surveys, interviews and research reviews have been tabulated or summarized, the school team will have the responsibility to prioritize the results. This means selecting areas to work on right away and letting others wait until another time.

Suggested Action Steps:

1. Select from the data gathered the information that is most essential to portray discrepancies in perception between groups (i.e., faculty vs. student perceptions) or between the way things are seen (perceptions) and the way things could be (ideals). It is not necessary to report out the results of every item. A summary list of commendations (areas which the school is perceived as doing well) and recommendations (areas where action for improvement is desired) based on survey data will generally meet faculty needs for information.

2. Break up long lists of objectives into shorter ones. It is easy for groups to be paralyzed by long and comprehensive, or detailed shopping lists of school improvement objectives. Here are several techniques:

   - Group objectives according to time needed to accomplish. Sort them as an immediate (6 months), mid-range (1-2 years), or long-range (3-5 year) objectives.

   - Group objectives according to level of difficulty. Sort as "easy to set in motion," "needs sustained attention over time," or "cannot be implemented at this time."

   - Group objectives by level of significance. The school team (or, where appropriate, the whole faculty) assigns at least two objectives to each of five categories:

     1 = least important 2 = below average 3 = average

     4 = above average 5 = most important

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3. Select final items for action. Label the items remaining in each shorter list as feasible (can we do it?), important (should we do it?), or available (are we doing it?). Give priority to objectives that are rated high on feasibility and importance, and low on availability.

   - Assign a committee to study objectives rated low in availability but high in importance.

   - Defer action on objectives that are rated high in importance and feasibility, but already available.

Special Consideration for the Principal:

§ Variables to consider when establishing priorities for school improvement at the building level include:

- The match between items on your needs assessment survey and goals/objectives set by the local school board and/or superintendent.

- The overall school climate and the immediate personal and professional needs of the faculty, students, and community.

- The attitude of the faculty to another on-going school improvement effort. Faculty time may already be committed to too many other projects.

- The level of understanding and willingness of the administration and the local school board to support your building-level improvement process and the action plans developed by the school improvement team.

- The level of parent, teacher union, and community support, where appropriate.

§ Develop "an eye for the whole chessboard." Look for linkages and synergies between efforts.

§ There are billions of problems that could absorb your energies. Deciding upon the ones that are right for your school takes careful selection. It's a good idea to realize that you don't have the time to solve them all.

References

Frank, Arlene and Kosecoff, Jacqueline. (1984). "Conducting Needs Assessments." Instructional Leadership Handbook, p. 40. James W. Keefe and John M. Jenkins, Editors. Reston, Virginia: National Association of Secondary School Principals.

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PROCESS STEP #4

DEVELOP ACTION PLANS

"I keep six honest serving-men (They taught me all I knew);
Their names were What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who."

—Rudyard Kipling
The Elephant's Child, Stanza 1

Strategic planning for school improvement requires thoughtful evaluation of possible options, the provision of contingencies in the event resources or conditions change, and the anticipation of mitigating and enabling forces in the school environment.

Detailed planning for school improvement leaves no doubt about who does what with whom, when, where, and how; the plan acknowledges the resources to be used, and the outcomes to be expected as a result of implementation. Ineffective planning is generally characterized by inattention to detail, incorrect assumptions about the constraints on change in schools, and overestimation of the instructional impact of activities selected to implement objectives.

Suggested Action Steps:

The development of action plans should be preceded by some preliminary preparations. Otherwise, the team will not have adequate information with which to build an achievable course of action. The following five steps represent a "plan to plan" and should be reviewed before actually writing the action plan.

Preliminary Steps

1. Analyze the information you have gathered in your needs assessment. Look at them as effects and dig deeper for probable causes This will help you organize the information into usable and understandable units for interpretation and discussion.

2. Write 3 to 5 problem statements based on your needs assessment data or school profile. This will interpret the data accurately and condense strong feelings into specific, coherent facts.
   Example from a local district plan: "Staff perception is that discipline is not handled effectively. One reason may be the lack of consistent enforcement of policy."

3. Agree on action objectives to address each problem statement. This will require consensus on desired future states and priorities based on the needs assessment, and information analysis.
   Example from a local district plan: "To implement a system of monitoring corridors so that students will not be walking around without permission from a supervising teacher."

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4. Develop selection criteria or agreed-upon guidelines for evaluating options in achieving the action objectives.
   Example from a local district plan:
   1. **Must be consistent with board policy**
   2. **Must be in line with the legal rights of minors**
   3. **Must be in clear written form for all to see**
   4. **Must not demand extraordinary amounts of extra time from staff**
   5. **Must have clearly defined teacher/administrator responsibilities**

5. Explore options and determine appropriate actions. Research as thoroughly as possible all sources of print materials and media, consultant/trainer assistance, packaged programs, other school policy and practices, etc. Make selections based on criteria.

Action Planning

Once these steps have been taken, the team is ready to develop an action plan.

6. Develop the action plan. The action plan is a visual public record.

   - It details in writing the problem statements that emerged from the needs assessment and information analysis
   - It spells out the action objectives based on group discussion
   - It includes all steps necessary to achieve the objectives--enumerating tasks or activities, identifying staff responsibility, setting target dates for completion, listing resources required for each, and describing the evidence of accomplishment to be used in evaluating impact.

FORMAT FOR AN ACTION PLAN

GOAL AREA (RELATED TO SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS VARIABLES) TRANSLATED INTO PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.

ACTION OBJECTIVE(S)

1. 3.
2 4.

SELECTION CRITERIA TO APPLY:

1. 3.
2. 4.

LIST OF ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

1. 4.
2. 5.
3. 6.

INTERVENTIONS SELECTED

WHAT	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES NEEDED	EVIDENCE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

7. Provide follow-through. Once the team has written the action plan, attention should be given to providing follow-through assistance to individuals who will be implementing specific tasks and activities. The follow through assistance may take the form of:

   - "coaching" or visits with other faculty members
   - obtaining resources (media, human or financial)
   - reviewing materials or plans developed by other work-groups
   - participating in staff-development activities, parent-relations groups

Special Considerations for the Principal:

§ Guide the team in the selection of appropriate action objectives to address a particular problem area. The following questions may be useful in reviewing action objectives:

- Have objectives been developed that have clear implication for administrators, teachers, students, and other school personnel?
- Have objectives been developed that affect building policy, whole school programs, or individual classroom practices?
- Have objectives been developed that will yield short term achievable measures, mid-range outcomes, and long term results?

§ School improvement teams often lose momentum after the plans are made. Help members identify responsibilities in implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the impact of the plans as they are put into action.

§ Sample action plans and formats developed by a variety of teams in other settings are available through the Rhode Island Educational Leadership Academy. Your team members may want to review some of these before proceeding with action planning.

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PROCESS STEP # 5

IMPLEMENT PLANS

"School improvement leadership--both as a team and individuals--needs to provide the extra shove that some people need to engage in your effort. Pressure, push, whatever the term—is a key ingredient for success....Your role may sometimes call for making somebody else's decision for them—and then giving them all the necessary support to make their efforts successful."

—Susan Loucks-Horsley
An Action Guide to School Improvement

Planning is one thing. Doing is another. Implementing school improvement plans is not a spectator activity. "Talking about it" needs to be balanced by "trying it out." Theory and practice must be combined. The anxiety of not knowing if you can succeed will be replaced by simple time-task schedules and by getting started.

Suggested Action Steps:

1. Create awareness of the school improvement plan and the process through which it is being implemented. Keep important groups aware of the "what" and "how" of your action plans. Short overviews and descriptive sessions with groups of teachers, parents, administrators, or school board members keep key groups informed and allow for additional input and questions. Some specific strategies include slide-tape shows, an open house for parents, school wide newsletter, briefings for individual staff members.

2. Identify who will implement the school improvement practice. Weigh the pros and cons of voluntary or mandatory participation, pilot testing in a few classrooms or school-wide adoption. Encourage opinion leaders to be early users. Try to involve some of the faculty who seem skeptical, but don't construe their negativism as your failure.

3. Evaluate current practices regarding the school improvement practice you want to develop. This "audit of existing practices" can identify other teachers who can be brought into the implementation phase. It can identify specific gaps in the experience, skills, and readiness of faculty at various grade levels.

4. Communicate expectations for staff participation and commitment. These expectations may include:

    - Giving the program activities a fair trial

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- Refraining from making judgements or individual decisions regarding implementation too soon
- Volunteering extra time to practice new skills, prepare new materials, learn new procedures

5. Coordinate logistics necessary to implement the plan. Improvement practices may require new materials, new equipment, new facilities, or new personnel. The practices may involve restructuring, rescheduling, or rethinking the ways things are done in your school. Listed below are areas of program implementation that require logistical coordination.

Money, Time, and Space

- Consultants/trainers--initial and follow-up
- Substitutes or teacher stipends
- Support staff (coordinators, aides)
- Equipment purchase or rental
- Materials
- Travel expenses
- Planning meetings
- Program evaluation

Time and Space

- Information sharing (faculty meetings, released time)
- Training--initial and follow-up
- Support/coordinator
- Team planning meetings

6. Provide on-going support to the people who will be bringing about the changes in student behavior or academic achievement. Support may be in the form of in-person assistance, teaching materials, leadership that keeps things moving, or moral encouragement to staff and school improvement team members.

7. Create time-lines for activities and events

   - Timelines are mental vision, or guidelines. It is good to set targets, but it is unrealistic and unhealthy (if not impossible) to demand that meet every milestone be met as scheduled. Be prepared to stop the train if the tracks are not clear.

Special Considerations for the Principal:

§ Leaders can provide support to school improvement efforts by:

- Clarifying goals and expectations
- Monitoring progress of the school improvement team
- Reminding people that the program is a priority
- Providing the nudge to action that only authority of the principal can provide
- Demonstrating genuine personal interest in assuring the outcomes of project activities

§ What goes on in staff development or training activity for teachers during the implementation stage can be critical to the success of the program.

- Initial training should provide information highlighting key features, approaches, and materials.

- Later training can provide opportunity for participants to discuss progress and plan for incorporating new practices in their daily work.
- Incremental or phased in training is superior to one shot deals, but the overall design must be carefully planned so that people get what they need when they are most ready for it.
- Longer team staff development programs especially ones providing actual demonstrations, coaching, problem-solving sessions, classroom observations, and management assistance, provide more opportunity for reflection on desired practices and applications of desired practices.
- An on-going approach to staff development provides more time for participants to learn new skills and implementation behaviors.

§ Researchers suggest that a significant change in school takes three to five years from its initiation to the point where it becomes truly incorporated into the life of a building and its classrooms.

- One-half to a full year can be spent in planning and preparing activities
- A full year can be spent mastering a practice and establishing a support system to sustain it.
- Successive years will involve spreading the practice to other teachers, evaluating impact, and refining procedures

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PROCESS STEP # 6

MONITOR PROGRESS

"The process-oriented problem solver who keeps a good record (words, pictures, plans, souvenirs, etc.) will have a far greater product than the problem-solver with no record of the rush to meet a goal."

—Dan Kohberg and Jim Bagnall
The Universal Traveler

Monitoring the progress of a school improvement program can be compared to traversing unfamiliar terrain with a compass. There may be no familiar landmarks to guide your steps. Only numerous resightings with your compass will assure that your are on target and have not drifted off course. In your school building, resightings may be made using your project timetable, action plan statements, faculty or student surveys, and student achievement measures. Detailed below are some other functions that contribute to the quality of a school improvement project.

Suggested Action Steps:

1. Stay close to the people who are making the school improvement idea happen. This means being in the corridors, classrooms, faculty rooms, and other facilities where teachers and students are interacting. Good principals practiced this long before Peters and Waterman (In Search of Excellence) named it Management by Wandering Around (MBWA). Some things to look for include:

   - Use or non-use of new practices and materials
   - Successful applications
   - Teachers having trouble--and what the trouble is
   - Complaints or negative remarks--informal or voiced as jokes
   - Logistical problems--shortages, storage problems, scheduling
   - Classroom management of problems
   - Teacher developed techniques or products

2. Track accomplishment of milestones in the master schedule or timeline for the school improvement effort.

3. Set a schedule of dates for the school improvement team to meet to review the progress made on each of the goals or action objectives. The following items could be put on the agenda of these meetings:

   - Progress report from subcommittees on accomplishment of goals/objectives
   - Plans for any intervention that may be needed to help the group meet its goals

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- List future steps and activities
- Develop agenda for next regular meeting
- Schedule date, time, and place for any interim or subcommittee meetings required to complete business

4. Assign a member of the school improvement team to each subcommittee or action/objective work-group established. This person does not have to be the chairperson but should serve as a resource to this group.

5. Maintain an active communications campaign throughout the implementation process. The effort may include:

   - Preparation of notices for parents and the community to inform them of the effective schools program and what activities are being planned for the current year.

   - Development of press releases or invitations to local newspapers to visit the school will help provide widespread coverage for school improvement activities.

   - Preparation of monthly or bimonthly reports to the school committee and central office administration. With these reports, include copies of your notices to parents and any press releases or newspaper clippings. Notices to staff with details of implementation may not be relevant for the school committee or central office.

   - Preparation of notices to the staff informing them of progress. These notices may be published on a regular basis or at the completion of one of the steps in the action plan.

Special Considerations for the Principal:

§ Communicate often with school improvement team members to assure them of your commitment to the project and enthusiasm for it.

§ Encourage team members to continue interactions with other members of the school staff. Help to foster the feeling that this project belongs to everyone, not just the team members.

§ Involve the curriculum director, assistant superintendent for instruction, and other district specialists in the process of monitoring activities.

§ Publicize quick successes and verbally reward the groups for meeting short-term goals.

§ Devise a simple checklist of major activities planned by the school improvement team and any sub-groups. Check off each activity as it is completed and post this checklist where it can be seen easily by all staff.

§ Keep a written record of progress made in achieving each action objective. A chronology of meetings held, materials distributed, staff development sessions conducted, surveys tabulated, etc., may provide important cues to future school improvement projects.

§ Monitor compliance with your concept of school mission.

- Do practices being implemented relate directly to increasing student achievement?
- Do activities lead to practices or behaviors that increase opportunity to learn, access to programs, or improved student outcomes?
- How strongly do proposed practices contribute to measurable and positive changes in student achievement?

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PROCESS STEP # 7

EVALUATE IMPACT

"If you don't know where you're going, you may wind up somewhere else."
—Sydney Harris
Winners and Losers

The evaluation process determines if the strategies employed were successful in attaining the objectives. This requires careful collection of implementation data, clearly defined student outcome measures, and a willingness to impartially assess the quantity and quality of achievement. Taking a critical look at the school improvement process itself, reviewing actions in order to better determine how to proceed, and examining changes over time are key dimensions of the evaluation process.

Suggested Action Steps:

1. At the beginning of the process, develop a written description of the improvement goals, including performance indicators you expect at the end of the program. (See the insert box for a sampling of performance indicators matched to goal areas for school effectiveness.)

2. Document the activities of each group or sub-group working on action objectives. This means careful filing and dating of minutes, action plans, agendas, staff development hand-outs, faculty or student surveys, pre and post tests, and other evidence of practice.

3. Administer a written questionnaire to participants. Perception of effectiveness could be gathered from faculty, administrators, students, parents, or school board members.

4. Gather achievement data and other measures of improved student outcomes. Compare what actually happened since the inception of the action plan to what you wanted to happen.

5. Conduct interviews with sample populations--the school improvement team members, administrators, teachers, students, and parents.

6. Synthesize the information gathered in steps 3, 4, and 5 into an evaluation report. The evaluation report will respond to the following major evaluation questions:

   - To what degree were project activities successful in generating the intended effects on outcomes?
     Example: "The drop-out rate in grade 10 was decreased from 17% to 10%."

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- What specific activities or approaches were associated with the most positive effects on student outcomes?
  Example: "Students in classes whose teachers had participated in the full GESA (Gender Expectations on Student Achievement) program showed higher yearly achievement gains in reading and mathematics."

- What organizational factors can be associated with attaining an overall increase in schoolwide performance?
  Example: "Use of faculty meetings to review grade level and subject matter achievement data has contributed to an overall focus on increasing student test scores in our building."

7. Include a discussion of contingencies in your summary report. These might include:

   - Unforeseen benefits that occurred outside of stated objectives
     Example: "Faculty spirit and enthusiasm has increased as an unanticipated outcome of this project in our school."

   - Unforeseen problems that occurred
     Example: "It was difficult to schedule planning meetings because of other major projects that competed for staff time."

   - Additional objectives that were developed during the process
     Example: "The team decided that the issue could not be dealt with in isolation from home-school relations. Therefore, they added two additional objectives to guide the plan of work this year."

Sample Performance Indicators

Goal Area: Safe and orderly school environment
Suggested Measures:

- Number of reports of disruptive behavior filed (include at least two levels of severity)
- Perception of teachers that school has a safe and orderly environment
- Perception of students that school has a safe and orderly environment
- Recorded incidents of vandalism or theft
- Suspension rate
- Staff and student knowledge of discipline policy

Goal Area: Clear and focused school goals
Suggested Measures:

- Written document clearly specifying instructional priorities and school mission
- Number of staff meetings at which instructional goals are discussed
- Perception of staff and others that school has focused goals
- Existence of basic skills mastery goals by grade level

Goal Area: Instructional leadership
Suggested Measures:

- Attendance of administrators at training sessions related to school effectiveness or instructional leadership
- Proportion of time that principals and assistant principal devote to instructional issues
- Perception of teachers that administration is instructionally involved and supportive of innovation
- Staff development provided on instructional issues

Goal Area: Climate of high expectations
Suggested Measures:

- Evidence that the reading level or difficulty level of tests has been reviewed
- Evidence that homework is assigned and corrected on a regular basis
- Evidence of equal access to all programs at elementary, middle and high school levels
- Observation that student-teacher interaction is equitable for all students in sampled classrooms
- Dropout rate
- Participation of students in extracurricular activities
- Observation of teacher behaviors that promote student self-esteem

Goal Area: Frequent monitoring of student progress
Suggested Measures:

- Evidence that elementary, middle school and selected high school programs are organized with specific skill-based objectives and mastery criteria
- Evidence that each student has a concise skill-based record that is frequently updated
- Evidence that instruction is tailored to the individual needs of students
- Evidence of testing against a national standard
- Evidence that testing is used to guide individualized instruction and program area improvements

Goal Area: Supportive home-school relations
Suggested Measures:

- Evidence of active parent groups
- Amount of parent contact by support staff (counselors, social workers, nurses, etc.)
- Level of voluntary classroom assistance by parents and other community members
- Perception of parental interest and involvement by teachers
- Existence of a school newsletter
- Average daily attendance

Goal Area: Time-on-task
Suggested Measures:

- Amount of time allocated to basic skills according to class schedules
- Percent of time students are attending to lesson (time-on-task) during basic skills instruction periods
- Frequency of class time interruptions (e.g., public address announcements, hallway disturbances, band practice, athletic events)

Special Considerations for the Principal:

§ School improvement programs aimed directly at the improvement of student performance can be evaluated by devising performance measures for academic achievement, social behavior, and student attitudes.

§ Teacher-growth measures can be developed in the same categories as described above. Your action plans may call for school-wide change in teacher collegiality, shared decision-making, or consensus on goals.

§ It is easier to evaluate the accomplishment of improvement process if the objective is defined in terms of changes in performance outcomes as a result of changes in certain procedures:

Example: "To decrease the number of disciplinary referrals by instituting a year-long staff development program focusing on teacher-student interactions."

In Summary

- School improvement plans that are described as attainable, measurable objectives are more likely to succeed than plans that are expressed as sets of vague or lofty ideals.
- Continuous reflection on practice leads to important clues for personal and professional growth

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SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS VARIABLES

Clear and Focused School Goals
Instructional Leadership
High Expectations
Time on Task
Monitoring Student Performance
Safe and Orderly Environment
Home-School Relations

EFFECTIVENESS VARIABLE

CLEAR AND FOCUSED GOALS

"First of all, principals must know what they want. I had to go into the school and tell my teachers what I expected from them. We agreed that we want discipline, reading scores raised, high student and staff morale. Then I organized the school to accomplish the goals we agreed were worth attaining. But first I had to make the teachers aware of the goals we could strive for together. I had to organize the school so that the goals could be met; good management and teamwork were crucial to this success."

—Majorie Brunch, Principal, Leif Erickson Elementary School Chicago, Illinois.

Highlights From Research:

Research studies conducted at both elementary and secondary school levels confirm that a shared philosophy or agreement on goals is a characteristic associated with successful schools. In instructionally effective schools there is a clearly articulated mission in which the staff shares commitment to instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability. The academic emphasis of the school goals must not be understated. Pupil acquisition of basic school skills takes precedence over all other school activities. When necessary, school energy and resources are diverted from other activities to achieve that end.

In schools with clear and instructionally focused goals:

1. School goals and achievement measures for the year are clearly stated, written, and distributed.
2. Consensus is developed among faculty around school goals and behavior expectations.
3. Needs assessment and other systematic methods of securing staff input are used to develop goals.
4. Progress toward the achievement of the goals is closely monitored and frequently reported.
5. Data on student academic performance is used to determine goals.
6. The goals are easily translated into classroom objectives by teachers.
7. Departments, houses, or grade-level teams are vital work groups to attend to goal achievement. These sub-units frequently develop a set of goals that are consistent with overall school goals.
8. Time is available for teachers to plan together.
9. Achievement of goals is acknowledged and celebrated.
10. Someone (or some group) acts as a "champion" of the school's goals.

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Goals are based on needs and needs emerge from attention to student outcome data. In the Connecticut School Improvement Project and other models of school improvement across the United States, both student achievement scores and other archival data are examined to detect positive or negative patterns in overall school performance. The outcome data includes:

Scholastic Aptitude Tests
State-mandated proficiency tests
Drop out rates
Number of students eligible for athletics and extracurricular activities
Community survey results
Military enlistments
School suspensions
Norm-referenced achievement tests
Percentage of passing grades
Attendance
Job placement
College acceptances
Racial/Ethnic tensions
Disciplinary referrals
Vandalism

Special Considerations for the Principal:

§ There are several important leadership functions related to developing and maintaining clear school goals. Among them are:

- Managing participation of staff and others at all stages of the school improvement process—identifying goals, generating commitment, planning, monitoring, and refining
- Modeling commitment in action and in words
- Visioning—helping others to see the goals and their connection to day to day activity
- Cheerleading—publishing the goals and their achievement
- Stewarding—preserving the "sacred trust" of student achievement in basic skills

§ Setting clear goals is easier than implementing them. Goals must be kept visible and be used to set priorities and allocate resources. The building principal is a key communicator of school goals and effectively fills this role when:

- referring to the school's academic goals in informal conversations with teachers
- conducting open discussions of school academic goals with teachers at faculty meetings
- citing school academic goals when making curriculum discussions with teachers
- acknowledging school academic goals in student assemblies, and publications
- promoting school academic goals in the building and community at large—posters, bulletin boards, displays, radio shows, contests, and clubs

In Summary

Goals are limited in number

Schools are clear about their goals

Staff, students, and community can express these goals

Time and money are devoted to accomplishing the goals

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EFFECTIVENESS VARIABLE

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

"There are some bad schools with good principals, but there are no good schools with bad principals."

—Ronald Edmonds

A recurring theme in recent educational research is the importance of the role of the principal in providing instructional leadership for school effectiveness. The concept may bewilder or threaten practitioners who assume that they must now master details of individual curriculum programs, devise new and more sophisticated teacher supervision/evaluation systems, or learn database management and statistical charting methods. While it is true that there are exemplary principals who do these things, the essence of instructional leadership lies more in fundamental convictions than in technical methodology. In effective schools, instructional leadership means that what teachers are teaching, how teachers are teaching, and how well students are learning is closely monitored and frequently communicated. In schools where instructional leadership is weak, there is lack of consensus about what teachers should be teaching, lack of attention to how teachers are teaching, and a general malaise about developing goals and strategies to increase student performance over previous levels.

Highlights from Research:

In effective schools:

1. Instructional leaders portray learning as the most important reason for being in school. In assemblies, public speeches, and writings, they emphasize the importance and value of high achievement.

2. Instructional leaders frame the academic mission of the school. They are able to state it in direct concrete terms. Parents and teachers frequently work with the building principal to achieve consensus on goals and objectives to be achieved by staff and students.

3. The building leader believes that all students can learn and that the school makes a difference between success and failure.

4. Building leaders know school effectiveness research, legitimize it, and model its use in discussing school problems.

5. Instructional leaders know and can demonstrate to teachers effective classroom management and instructional strategies.

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6. Instructional leaders ensure curriculum congruence between and within grade levels. They require that:

   - goals and objectives are developed for each course
   - textbooks and materials compliment the objectives
   - tests are aligned with the content taught, and textbooks/material used

7. Instructional leaders establish time-conserving routines that don't disrupt instructional activities. Time-use priorities are established, widely communicated, and enforced.

8. Instructional leaders set up systems of incentives and rewards to encourage excellence in student and teacher performance. They act as figureheads in delivering awards and highlighting the importance of their efforts.

9. Instructional leaders acquire the resources needed to support and maintain instructional programs.

10. School leaders emphasize the importance of parental support and home-school communications of the school's instructional efforts.

11. Instructional leaders spend time in classrooms and corridors. They give frequent feedback on teacher and student performance. They give attention to the review of lesson plans, examination of student progress, and verbal or written comments from parents.

12. The teacher supervision process focuses on improving instruction and teacher-student interactions.

13. School leaders involve staff and others in planning improvement efforts.

14. Instructional leaders monitor student progress using several different sources, including teacher-made tests, student report cards, criterion-referenced tests, norm-referenced standardized achievement tests, and parent comments.

Teacher Evaluation: A Checklist

Instructional leaders insist on high standards for both students and teachers. The evaluation process for teachers includes attention to:

- Classroom management strategies
- Academic learning time
- Curriculum and objectives
- Use of guided and independent practice
- Opportunities to respond or perform
- Student success rate
- Classroom grouping procedures
- Homework assignments
- Use of quizzes and tests to identify and correct misconceptions
- Appropriate use of materials
- Evidence of yearly, term, and weekly planning

Special Considerations for the Principal:

§ In-service education programs are most effective when:

- Topics are related to the experience and needs of the staff
- Programs support the translation of ideas into practice
- Presenters structure focused interaction between teachers and administrators
- Opportunities for supervised practice/interaction are built into the program
- Teachers and principals, working together describe, analyze, interpret, plan, or teach each other.

§ Effective school principals don't "go it alone." They tend to be members of collegial or support teams, or both. This expands their access to new approaches and ideas. They link to:

- Fellow administrators within or outside the district
- Principal academies or centers
- State and national professional associations
- Programs supported by other foundations, federal agencies, or state departments of education

§ Effective school principals work continuously at refining the personal skills that enable them to enter into helping relationships with their staff.

- time management
- motivation
- goal setting
- delegating
- listening
- detecting communication screens
- resolving conflicts
- group decision making

§ Effective school principals work just as hard increasing knowledge and skills in areas that enable them to provide stronger instructional leadership:

- framing and communicating school goals
- supervising and evaluating teachers
- coordinating curricular programs
- monitoring pupil progress
- promoting professional development
- providing incentives for teachers and students
- maintaining academic standards

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EFFECTIVENESS VARIABLE

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

"Effective schools expect teachers to teach and students to learn. Standards are high, but realistic. No student is allowed to attain less than minimum mastery of basic skills at the assigned grade level. Teachers believe they have the ability to provide the required instructional program and that all students can master the basic skills they teach."

—Ohio Department of Education

Clear goals and high expectations are inextricably linked. A climate of expectation in which the school staff believes and demonstrates that students can attain mastery of basic skills and that staff members have the capability to help students achieve such mastery pervades instructionally effective schools. The expectations for pupil performance are not differentiated according to race, gender, ethnic group or socio-economic background.

Highlights from Research:

1. Research shows that teachers will usually get what they expect of their pupils.
2. When teachers come to expect specific behavior and achievement from particular students, they behave differently toward different students.
3. This differentiated treatment communicates to students what behavior and achievement the teacher expects from them. Intended or not, this teacher expectation affects student self-concepts, achievement motivation, and level of aspiration.
4. Unless either the student or the teacher makes an effort to break the pattern of behavior established in the classroom, students for whom the teacher has high expectations will achieve at high levels, and the achievement of low expectation students will decline.

Teachers Establish an Academically Demanding Climate By:

- setting rigorous demands in terms of course content to be covered
- making clear course requirements and specific instructional objectives
- setting high work standards for all students
- regularly assigning homework with prompt follow up and correction
- devoting a high percentage of classtime to academic tasks
- communicating with parents of students who are experiencing difficulty
- conducting an orderly and business-like approach to classroom management
- providing opportunities for students to experience success, resulting in increased student confidence, motivation, and self-esteem
- providing opportunities for student responsibility and leadership

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Special Considerations for the Principal:

§ Information about ways in which teachers sometimes differ in their behavior toward high and low achieving students should be part of in-service instruction.

§ Most teachers do not have formal ways for analyzing or monitoring their interactions with different types of students. In-service programs should include opportunities to observe other classrooms (and to be observed by other teachers). Teachers need to talk with other professionals about the craft of teaching.

§ Teachers need to develop greater tolerance and skills for dealing with students when success is not immediate. A degree of failure may be present in any teaching situation. Reteaching as a valid instructional strategy must be encouraged.

§ Teachers need to discuss, as a group, criteria for evaluating student performance. Unexplained discrepancies that exist between classrooms may negatively affect some students's motivation (especially that of low achievers)

§ Raising standards and expectations is an incremental process in which demonstrated success plays a critical role. Help teachers to view the many steps needed to reach the top of the stairs.

Strategies Used by Effective Teachers to Communicate High Expectations to Students:

- Call on all students.
- Make sure students get all the help they need, even those who may not ask for it.
- Provide adequate response time (wait at least five seconds after asking a question).
- Probe for answers by rephrasing questions, giving clues, or providing more information.
- Give low-achievers time to practice thinking skills on higher-level questions.
- Offer positive reactions to student answers—either affirmative or corrective.
- Praise behaviors, not personalities.
- Give full attention to students who are speaking.
- Model the behaviors expected.
- Show a sincere interest in the lives and experiences of all students.

Policies That Communicate High Expectations

- Where homework is an integral part of the students' day and is used consistently throughout the school, it helps to establish high expectations for students. The same is true for an incrementally-based grading policy monitored by the principal.

- Remediation policies help ensure student mastery, especially ones based on the common instructional framework and ones which prevent students from permanently entering remediation programs.

- Schools in which policies require that progress reports be sent to parents of all students several times a year convey to students and parents the importance of academic work. One district has a practice of requiring parents to pick up student report cards at the school and meet with teachers.

- A school policy on retention and promotion based on student mastery of basic grade level skills acts to communicate high staff expectations.

- Schools that promote academic achievement have clearly defined goals based on student performance in instructional objectives.

- School policies on instructional grouping that promote the belief that all students can achieve grade-level objective convey to all that the school works to achieve high levels of student achievement. Policies that promote ability grouping create de facto differences or levels of educational aspirations for children.

- School policies that protect instructional time through clear and consistently enforced rules for student attendance, tardiness, and public address announcements promote the general norm of academic emphasis.

- When the school staff takes time to develop and enforce policies about appropriate student behavior they are telling students that school is for learning and that behavior that interferes with learning opportunities will not be tolerated.

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EFFECTIVENESS VARIABLE

TIME ON TASK

"Effective schools emphasize opportunity to learn and more time on task. The more time spent in instruction, the greater the learning that takes place. Implications exist for improved use of classroom time, better instructional strategies, and more careful review of curriculum content."

—Dr. William J. Gauthier, Jr.
Connecticut State Department of Education

Schools are time-bound places. Much has been written about the relationship between student achievement and time spent in learning. Extending the school day, lengthening the school year, increasing the time allocated to instruction in basic skills, and reducing classroom interruptions are some examples of adjustments that are frequently proposed to improve student achievement. Simply more—more time, more quiet—is not enough. Attention must also be given to productive use of the classroom time already available.

Highlights from Research:

1. Instructional time—time spent actually teaching students the knowledge and skills of the subject or grade level—can be increased by planning and maintaining better classroom routines:

   - Intrusions into class time such as announcements on the P. A. system can be eliminated; announcements can be made orally or in writing during a "homeroom" period.
   - Attendance can be taken while the teacher is monitoring student seatwork or unobtrusively by an aide or student assistant while the teacher proceeds with instruction.
   - Materials needed for use in a class period can be readied and distributed before the class period or at the beginning of the class.
   - Supplemental activities can be available for students who complete their assignments before the end of the class period.
   - Procedures for entering and leaving the room, sharpening the pencils,etc., can be standardized so that students can act without having to seek permission or disrupt the flow of instruction.
   - Changes from one classroom activity (e.g., lecture) to another (e.g., discussion groups) can be planned and carried out smoothly with minimal loss of time.

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2. Time on task—time when students are actually engaged in the process of learning or doing—can be increased by better use of instructional strategies. Teachers can:

   - Clearly communicate the purpose or goal of the lesson. Students spend more time on task when they know what they are expected to learn.

   - Keep things moving and pace the lesson appropriately. Reduce the number of digressions, and move the class purposefully toward daily, weekly, and long-range goals.

   - Reinforce task-oriented behavior. Praise and encourage students for paying attention and hard work. If appropriate, provide incentives and rewards for such behavior. Be sure that students see the incentives and rewards as valuable to them, not just the teachers.

   - Monitor the learning. Ask periodic questions during a presentation. Use short quizzes to check students' progress. Circulate during supervised study time to see if students are working on assigned tasks.

   - Help students correct errors and misunderstandings as they occur. If errors and misunderstandings accumulate, students become "lost" and time spent on task decreases dramatically. Also be sure that students possess the prerequisite background information before beginning a task.

3. Student success rate—the actual success a student encounters within engaged time—can be increased by better management of student-teacher interactions, difficulty levels, and content in the curriculum. Teachers can:

   - Monitor the quality of student-teacher interactions (i.e., response opportunities, acknowledgements, by teacher, higher level questioning, analytical feedback).

   - Specify similar unstructured objectives for all students, and give different assignments based on those objectives to different groups of students.

   - Permit students to move from one area of the course or curriculum when they have demonstrated sufficient knowledge or skill.

Special Considerations for the Principal:

§ Encourage teams to give attention to spreading desirable classroom practices (i.e., classroom rules, homework assignments, transition between learning activities, student-teacher interactions, individual seatwork). At the same, time change building level or district policies that result in distraction or dilutions of student learning time.

§ Discourage the simplistic notion that more time automatically means more learning.

§ Focus on other instructional variables (course objectives, content covered, diagnosis of student skills, methods of effective instruction) that influence the use of time by students and teachers.

§ Assure peer observations of classroom practices undertaken for developmental purposes are not tied to district or building teacher evaluation procedures.

§ Assist teams in identifying and selecting time-on-task observation instruments that are clear and easy to administer for self-improvement procedures.

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EFFECTIVENESS VARIABLE

MONITORING STUDENT PROGRESS

"In a tightly coupled curriculum, there is a match between the curriculum objectives, instructional strategies used, and the content of instruments used to measure student progress."

—Marsha Weil
Santa Clara County Office Education

Monitoring student progress involves frequent and systematic tracking of pupil performance of instructional objectives. In effective schools, teachers and administrators know where children are in the process of learning important skills; certain groups or individuals are not allowed to fall between the cracks. The use of test results is a key ingredient in planning the curriculum, shaping classroom instruction, and evaluating the effectiveness of particular programs or materials.

Highlights from Research:

In effective schools:

1. Test results, grade reports, attendance records, and other data resources are used to spot potential problems. Achievement data drive changes in instructional programs and school procedures.

2. Summaries of student performance are shared with all staff. Periodic reports are also made to the community. Both district-wide and individual school scores are analyzed. The present status of achievement by grade and by school is compared with national norms, state norms, and district-wide improvement targets. All staff participate in analyzing results, making inferences about program success, and targeting new areas for school improvement.

3. Measurement programs are coordinated. District-level planning reflects district-wide selection of tests, standardized procedures for administration of tests, and specific routines for scoring, securing, reporting, and analyzing results.

4. Tests are selected or developed to reflect the goals and objectives of the curriculum. They align closely with textbooks or other instructional materials used in classrooms.

5. Norm-referenced, standardized tests are used to compare student progress with national norms.

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6. Criterion-referenced tests are designed by teachers to assess the degree of student mastery of course objectives.

7. Statewide proficiency tests are administered to assess basic skills proficiency.

8. Trend data are gathered to compare student achievement over time.

9. Test data, grade distribution, and enrollment patterns are analyzed by race, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status to detect any inequity and to ensure that all students are learning.

10. Individualized student data are reported to parents promptly and systematically.

11. Retention and promotion policies are based, in part, on the results of criterion-referenced test results.

Monitoring Pupil Progress in the Classroom: A Checklist

- Teachers use frequent oral, visual, and written checks of student mastery of instructional objectives.
- Teachers grade assignments and tests promptly and help students to understand corrections.
- Teachers know and use sound test construction techniques.
- Student performance is measured in various forms: paper and pencil tests, oral reports, classroom demonstrations, and special projects.
- Students gain practice with a variety of standardized test item types: multiple choice, short answer, true and false, matching, and essay.
- Teacher questioning techniques test a range of cognitive processes: recall, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.
- Term grades or report cards are based upon criteria that are made known well in advance. They result from many and frequent assessment points and relate to the mastery of course or grade-level objectives.
- Criteria for grading are relatively standardized across classrooms.

Special Considerations for the Principal:

§ School level planning should flow from or acknowledge district level planning and procedures.

§ Students may be better prepared for taking tests by receiving specific instruction in test-taking skills or by practicing with previous test formats. This does not "contaminate" the test results or the integrity of the school.

§ Staff members may need to be prepared in conferencing techniques to communicate with parents about individual student scores.

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EFFECTIVENESS VARIABLE

SAFE AND ORDERLY ENVIRONMENT

"In every successful school, the structure of order was firm, fair, and most of all, consistent."

—National Institute of Education
Violent Schools, Safe Schools, and the Safe School Study Report to Congress

The expression "safe and orderly environment" refers to the general safety of the school building and grounds and to the system of student discipline. General safety consists of the absence of physical harm, illegal, or disruptive activities. Student discipline includes both the development and enforcement of school rules. Specific aspects of the school discipline program include the type and numbers of school and classroom rules, the process used to develop and communicate about rules, and the consistent enforcement of school rules.

Highlights from Research:

In effective schools and classrooms:

1. Student conduct standards are established and specific rules are enumerated in publications distributed to students, teachers and parents.
2. Consequences for rule violations are clearly stated.
3. Communication about rules and consequences is prominent. The written code of conduct specifies acceptable behavior, outlines consequences for unacceptable behavior, and specifies procedures that are routine and quick to administer.
4. School rules are enforced effectively and consistently.
5. Routine building practices promote good discipline. Follow up and action for absenteeism and tardiness normally occur within a day.
6. There is a well-known and systematic procedure for keeping track of student offenses.
7. There is an on-going review of rules, consequences, and patterns of student violations.
8. The school building is a safe place for persons and property.

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9. Personal interactions between teachers and students are positive.

   - Teachers pay attention to student interests, problems, and accomplishments
   - Teachers let students know they care

10. Students are allowed and encouraged to develop a sense of responsibility and self-reliance. Older students, in particular, are given opportunities to make decisions and assume responsibilities about important school issues.

Special Considerations for the Principal:

§ Classroom arrangement can produce conditions that lead to problems. Listed below are guidelines for effective and efficient classroom organization:

- The teacher must be able to observe all students at all times.
- Heavy use areas and traffic lanes should be unobstructed.
- Students should be able to see the instructional presentation area without undue turning or movement.
- Classroom material should be readily available; distributing them and collecting them should not result in off task behavior and wasted time.

§ Classroom procedures should set clear expectations for student behavior during:

- The beginning and end of each class period
- Use of supplies and equipment
- Teacher-led instruction
- Individual seatwork
- Small group work

§ Effective teachers use the first weeks of the school year to help students learn appropriate behavior. Classroom rules and procedures become the content of instruction.

§ Administrators can provide assistance to teachers early in the school year by:

- Providing special orientation sessions for new faculty members.
- Providing all teachers with extra planning time before students arrive.
- Organizing in-service activities around crucial classroom management topics to give teachers a head start in the new year.
- Developing a checklist of planning activities for teachers.
- Using teachers who are good classroom managers as resources and models.
- Lightening the amount of school record keeping and logistical activities for teachers at the beginning of the school year.

§ Other school-wide practices that can be monitored by the building principal include:

- Setting the bell schedule (if one is necessary) to allow equivalent time for classes.
- Assuring adequate numbers of textbooks and other required classroom materials.
- Minimizing classroom interruptions such as PA announcements and the sending of students to and from the office and other areas of the building.
- Leveling unbalanced classes as quickly as possible.

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EFFECTIVENESS VARIABLE

HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS

"The presence of parents in the school sends a message to the community that the school cares about the children and the community. It sends a message to the children that the parents expect them to perform well socially and academically."

—James Comer
Yale University

Parents and citizens provide the support, encouragement, and resources that schools need to succeed. Community support is reflected by higher levels of student achievement and teacher performance. Schools with a strong home-school relations program attend to the following conditions:

- communication about the schools with parents
- providing structures for input and governance
- creating numerous opportunities for involvement and support of programs
- developing parent learning programs and materials

Highlights from Research:

In effective schools:

1. Parents have various options for becoming involved in school activities, especially in ways that support the instructional program.

2. Procedures for parent involvement are clearly communicated to parents and are acted on consistently.

3. Staff members provide parents with information and techniques for helping students to learn. Examples include:

    - training sessions (discipline, study skills, reading, and mathematics skills)
    - handouts
    - suggested reading lists
    - vocabulary lists by grade level
    - interpreting test scores

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School Building Policy for Home-School Relations:
A Checklist

- A school handbook informs parents and citizens about school hours, contact persons, special events, visiting procedures, goals and objectives, and the school philosophy for parent involvement

- Parents and visitors are welcome at school. Entrances and visitor parking areas are clearly marked. A student guide or greeter is available in the school lobby to provide directions.

- Parents participate in school affairs according to their needs and interests. There are numerous and varied opportunities for participation, ranging from attendance (dances, plays, field trips, athletic events, concerts, etc.) to decision-making (curriculum study, principal advisory, policy review board).

- Administrators, specialists, and teachers balance the positive and negative information told to parents about their child.

- Interpreters are provided for all situations in which a parent, whose dominant language is not English, is present. This is especially important at disciplinary review cases, parent-teacher conferences, and community forums.

- Routine procedures for carrying out school policy are clear, simple, and quick to administer. Parental involvement or requests in handling absences, truancies, tardiness, access to school records, or disciplinary referrals demonstrate both conviction and common sense. Procedures are reviewed regularly to promote efficiency and effectiveness.

- Special bulletins or regular newsletters inform parents and community members of specific ways in which they can participate in school programs. They also provide parents with the school year calendar, changes in district rules and regulations, and other rights and responsibilities.

Special Considerations for the Principal:

§ Parents as volunteers or salaried aides contribute in many ways to school improvement.. They can be assigned to:

- assist in monitoring and encouraging student attendance
- checking student homework and guided practice
- reinforce the code of conduct of the school
- serve as visiting performer, speaker, or tutor
- prepare instructional materials

§ Research has shown that school policies—written statements shared with students and parents—can make the difference between more productive and less productive school learning environments. Parents should be regularly informed about school policy regarding:

- expectations for student academic achievement in basic skill areas
- student behavior and classroom conduct
- use of instructional time in class
- homework assignments
- retention and promotion practices
- incentives and rewards for teachers and students
- procedures and options for parent participation in school activities
- rules for eligibility in extracurricular programs

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